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ABSTRACT

To determine the reading, listening, and general habits of junior high school students, a survey was conducted in the spring of 1970 in a suburban junior high school under the direction of the school library. The results are compiled in a series of charts which include: home audiovisual equipment; time spent watching television; free time activities; participation in sports; use of school libraries; number and kinds of books read; and names and number of magazines read. The last chart contains student suggestions for improving the school library. The results of the survey point the way to a reanalysis of library acquisition and library improvement in a junior high school, in addition to providing a fuller understanding of the junior high school student. (KC)

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# THE JUNIOR HIGH YEARS, A PROFILE

Nancy Jacobson

In times such as these when youth appear so different from those in other times, it seems wise to stop for a moment and reconsider whether this is so. The press is always the first to bring out the sensational; and sometimes parents as well as teachers digest the news items whole without considering the numbers involved. Times have changed, no question. The choices, both good and bad, flood the very air the children breathe. Yet, in spite of this there is a thread of consistency with the past that should not be overlooked. This article attempts to show the less conspicuous aspects of the young teenagers and demonstrate the un-newsworthy parts often omitted or not considered at all by those who bother to write about them.

The junior high for some reason seems the least discussed in educational circles. There are fewer books dealing specifically with it than with elementary and high school. Even Silberman in Crisis in the Classroom advances the supposition that the junior high is a step-child in the school system when he dismisses it with one succinct sentence. "And the junior high school, by almost unanimous agreement, is the wasteland--one is tempted to say cesspool of American education."

Those who work with this age child generally feel it is a most difficult age, if not the most difficult of all. A thirteen year old is neither fish nor fowl and only time will change that fact; in the meanwhile, he must

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cope with fascinating and frightening inner forces at the same time as he must cope with more mature expectations from the outside. The most gratifying factor in the outcome of this report was the positive, mature and sometimes even satisfied side of the children.

The survey on which this is based was conducted in the spring of 1970 in a suburban junior high under the direction of the school library. The school is not exceptional. It is housed in an old building that sometimes stymies contemporary programs. Teachers are a mixture of traditionalists and experimentalists. The economic background (with emphasis on the affluent) and the mental capacity of the students run the gamut. The survey was concerned with reading, listening, and viewing habits primarily, but also included other non-school activities. Although it has a special interest for librarians, it seemed to offer a more universal understanding of this age child and therefore should have value for teachers, parents, and others working with young teenagers.

In order to more easily interpret the vast accumulation of information, one might take a hypothetical student out of the mass of data. Karen, an eighth grade girl who considers herself an average student, one who usually receives B's and C's on her report card, is a good candidate. At home she spends most of her time watching television, often two or more hours a day. Someone in the family has a tape recorder and a record player. Chances are that she operates only the record player. If she were a boy, she would probably run both.

This teenager likes sports, especially swimming and tennis. The boys she knows like them too, but spend more time at them than she does, and they really prefer baseball and fishing. If she could, Karen would like to learn to ride horseback or ski.

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She also spends her time reading, listening to records, "fooling around", and working, either at home or babysitting. Random items commented upon by her peers include: go to brother's apartment, design new maps, sit in on a biology class, think, hit my sister, get smashed, listen, meet some boys, explore, lie in my room, go to the races, look for girls, get in trouble, go to concerts, daydream, do things alone, play solitaire, tease my sister, walk my dog, yoga, collect china, play pool, fly, talk, watch birds, sit on a hill, and do nothing.

If she could, Karen would like to travel, read more, drive a car, and do more of what she is already doing. Some of the other students when asked what they would like to do, commented as follows: protest, be lazy, drive in auto races, try sex, get to know more people, climb roofs, go places with dad, sky dive, leave the country, go to museums, go to weddings, look at old things, see x-rated movies, trade things, have parties, not go to school, meet a good friend, go out in the night, have my own apartment, garden, make a million, spend money, build a go-kart, drag race, shop, make my own decisions, work in a lab, teach PE, stay out as late as I want, smoke grass, my days are filled all the time, join the Peace Corps, play with a rock group, learn some languages, run away, take drugs, help the poor, buy a yacht, talk to more people, I do everything I want already, be free, be able to live in the woods, establish a relationship with a girl, make up wallpaper, climb a mountain, train another falcon.

Last year Karen read ten books in addition to those assigned for school work. They were mostly fiction stories of teenage girls, mysteries, novels, and biographies. The boys read more sports stroies and non-fiction. In a yearly favorite book contest Black Like Me is always a front runner as well as

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the perennials, To Kill a Mockingbird and Gone With the Wind. Other books in the top five each year are titles like: Up the Down Staircase, Death Be Not Proud, Catcher in the Rye, Cheaper By the Dozen, and The Hobbit. An occasional book written for the age level succeeds. It's Like This, Cat and My Side of the Mountain have both made it once. A sampling of other books students have read and liked goes like this: The Godfather, Goodbye Columbus, Exodus, 2001, Bobby Orr and the Big Bad Bruins, I Never Promised You a Rose Garden, Hawaii, Keys of the Kingdom, The Fountainhead, Lord of the Flies, and an infinite variety of others. There was no pattern from the seventh to the ninth grade save that of variety.

Most of the books Karen reads she borrows from the school library which she visits twice a week. By the time she is in the ninth grade, she will buy them for the most part, and will use the school library less as she uses the public library more. Although she visits the public library twice a month, it is the third source for obtaining her reading material.

At home her family receives at least two newspapers, one of which is local and the other statewide. The periodicals most often read are those involving current events such as Life, Time, Look, Newsweek, and the newspapers. Seventeen and American Girl are her favorite teenage magazines, but she also likes fashion magazines, particularly Vogue. The boys prefer Sports Illustrated, Playboy, and Hot Rod.

Interests in books and magazines taken together range from auto repair manuals, biographies, ESP, fishing, Germany, the classics, the Hardy Boys, surfing, cars, magic, outdoors, revolution, sex, drugs, population, flying, fish, space, handwriting analysis, adventures, mysteries, novels, to all of the

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best sellers. Less than ten percent of the books listed were written for a teenage audience.

Perhaps here are many of the reasons why adults working with the junior high age persevere in spite of all the headaches. The activities listed individually by students may not provide any consensus per se but by their very variety and tone give life to the teenagers who wrote them and provide more insight than all the charts put together. Their diversity is as great as that of the adult population. The endless types of interests, the maturity and lack of it, the happiness and dissatisfaction all are part of the polliwog stage of being or maybe caterpiller is more apt; and just think, no two with the same spots!

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CHART A

Number of Students Surveyed

| | Boys | Girls | TOTAL | By Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7th Grade | 94 | 116 | 210 | 34 |
| 8th Grade | 98 | 98 | 196 | 32 |
| 9th Grade | 95 | 117 | 212 | 34 |
| Total | 287 | 331 | 618 | |
| Percentage | 46 | 54 | | 100 |

CHART B

Grades in Percentage

| | AB | BC | CD | DF |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7th Grade | 36 | 47 | 16 | 0 |
| 8th Grade | 24 | 47 | 26 | 1 |
| 9th Grade | 19 | 55 | 27 | 4 |

CHART C

Home Audio Visual Equipment
By Percentage

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| | None | One or More | Percentage of reported equip. now operating | Percentage of reported equip. run by students |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Television | .4 | | | |
| Black & White | | 90 | | |
| Color | | 42 | | |
| Tape Recorder | 24 | 75 | 77 | 71 |
| Slide Projector | 57 | 41 | 97 | 64 |
| Film Projector | 57 | 40 | 94 | 58 |
| Record Player | 4 | 95 | 97 | 96 |

CHART D

Time Spent Watching Television
By Percentage

| | |
|---|---|
| Never | 7 |
| 1-2 hours per day | 48 |
| 3 hours or more per day | 31 |
| Only weekends | 12 |
| Total watchers | 91 |

CHART E

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17 Most Mentioned Free Time Activities

| GRADE | By Rank 7th | 8th | 9th | TOTAL | By Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participating in sports | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 78 |
| Television watching | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 44 |
| Reading | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 40 |
| Playing or fooling around | 3 • | 4 | 5 | 4 | 25 |
| Listening to records | 4 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 15 |
| Working or baby sitting | 5 | 5 | 8 | 6 | 13 |
| Visiting with friends and telephoning them | 7 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 9 |
| Studying | 8 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 9 |
| Listening to radio | 9 | 13 | 6 | 9 | 8 |
| Walking | 7 | 11 | 7 | 10 | 7 |
| Going to town | 6 | 9 | 16 | 11 | 6 |
| Sewing | 11 | 11 | 10 | 12 | 6 |
| Riding bikes | 6 | 13 | 15 | 13 | 6 |
| Eating | 14 | 15 | 9 | 14 | 6 |
| Practicing instrument | 12 | 14 | 12 | 15 | 5 |
| Art work | 9 | 10 | 17 | 15 | 5 |
| Household chores | 10 | 12 | 17 | 16 | 5 |

•Any repeat of a number indicates a tie.

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CHART F

10 Most Popular Sports Participated In

| GRADE | Rank 7th | 8th | 9th | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Baseball | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Swimming | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Fishing | 3 | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| Tennis | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 |
| Horseback riding | 6 | 5 | 3 | 5 |
| Skiing | 5 | 7 | 4 | 6 |
| Basketball | 5• | 8 | 6 | 7 |
| Hockey | 7 | 5 | 8 | 8 |
| Track | 10 | 9 | 6 | 9 |
| Gymnastics | 8 | 11 | 7 | 10 |

The "total" figures were determined by the number of times mentioned.

•Any repeat of a number indicates a tie

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## CHART G

## 17 Most Mentioned Free Time Activities Students Would Like to Participate in Or Do More If They Could

| GRADE | Rank 7th | 8th | 9th | TOTAL | By Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sports | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 50 |
| Travel | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 14 |
| Read | 4 | 3 | 10 | 3 | 6 |
| Drive a car | 8 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Play and fool around | 3 | 7 | 11 | 5 | 5 |
| Go to the beach | 10 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 4 |
| Art work | 6 | 4 | 8 | 7 | 4 |
| Visit with friends | 5 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 4 |
| Sleep | 10 | 10 | 4 | 9 | 3 |
| Watch television | 7 | 7 | 10 | 10 | 3 |
| Go to parties | 10 | 7 | 9 | 10 | 3 |
| Date | - | 9 | 6 | 11 | 3 |
| Go to movies | 10 | 6 | 10 | 12 | 2 |
| Get a job | 8 | 10 | 8 | 12 | 2 |
| Ride a mini bike | 12 | 5 | 11 | 13 | 2 |
| Ride a motorcycle | 11 | 12 | 7 | 14 | 2 |
| Ride a bike | 9 | 9 | 12 | 14 | 2 |
| Same as already doing in Chart E | % 24 | % 28 | % 20 | | 24 |
| No Comment | | | | | 4 |

CHART H

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10 Most Popular Sports
Students Would Like to Participate In
Or Do More

| GRADE | Rank 7th | 8th | 9th | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Swimming | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Horseback riding | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Skiing | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Tennis | 3 | 4 | 6 | 4 |
| Fishing | 7 | 5 | 4 | 5 |
| Water skiing | 6 | 7 | 5 | 6 |
| Sailing | 8 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Baseball | 4 | 7 | - | 8 |
| Boating | 8 | 6 | 7 | 9 |
| Camping | 5 | 9 | - | 10 |

Some just want to do more of what they are doing already as listed in #10.

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CHART I

Use of School and Public Library

Percentages

| GRADE | 7th | 8th | 9th | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| School library visits per week | | | | |
| Never | 9 | 12 | 33 | 18 |
| Once | 43 | 31 | 29 | 34 |
| Twice | 28 | 38 | 22 | 29 |
| Three or more times | 19 | 20 | 14 | 18 |
| School Library Users One or more times per week | 90 | 90 | 65 | 81 |
| Public Library visits per month | | | | |
| Never | 25 | 18 | 20 | 20 |
| Once | 28 | 23 | 29 | 28 |
| Twice | 22 | 24 | 20 | 22 |
| Three or more times | 25 | 32 | 30 | 29 |
| Public Library Users One or more times per month | 74 | 81 | 80 | 77 |
| Public Library card holders | | | | |
| Yes | 82 | 90 | 85 | 86 |
| No | 13 | 6 | 9 | 10 |
| No answer | 5 | 2 | 5 | 4 |

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CHART J

Where Students Obtain Most of Their Books and Magazines

| GRADE | Rank 7th | 8th | 9th | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Books | | | | |
| Buy | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| School Library | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| Public Library | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Borrow and/or other | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Magazines | | | | |
| Buy | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| School Library | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Borrow | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Public Library | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| *Other | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |

*Usually means parent's subscriptions to magazines

CHART K

Newspapers Received

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| GRADE | Percentage 7th | 8th | 9th | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lawrence Eagle Tribune | 85 | 87 | 89 | 86 |
| Andover Townsman | 60 | 60 | 61 | 60 |
| Boston Globe | 45 | 48 | 54 | 49 |
| Boston Herald Traveler | 35 | 35 | 32 | 34 |
| New York Times | 13 | 13 | 16 | 14 |
| Other | 24 | 19 | 23 | 22 |
| None | 1 | 0 | .9 | .8 |
| Those receiving three or more | 50 | 42 | 34 | 41 |

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CHART L

Number of Books Read

| GRADE | Percentage 7th | 8th | 9th | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Last year | | | | |
| None | 3 | 6 | 6 | 5 |
| One | 3 | 3 | 6 | 3 |
| 2-10 | 29 | 32 | 34 | 32 |
| 10 or more | 56 (85) | 56 (88) | 52 (86) | 54 (86) |
| No answer | 8 | 3 | 2 | 6 |
| Last month | | | | |
| None | 13 | 11 | 18 | 14 |
| One | 27 | 37 | 32 | 32 |
| 2-5 | 39 | 33 | 27 | 33 |
| 5 or more | 14 (53) | 13 (46) | 12 (39) | 14 (47) |
| No answer | 7 | 6 | 12 | 7 |

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CHART M

Audio Visual-Printed Matter Preference

| GRADE | Rank 7th | 8th | 9th | TOTAL | By Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| See a film | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 86 |
| Look at a magazine | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 56 |
| Read a book | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 51 |
| Listen to a tape | 2 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 41 |
| See a film strip | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 32 |

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CHART N

Kinds of Books Students Usually Check Out

By Rank

| | Checked Out From Library | | | | Library Needs More Of | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 7th | 8th | 9th | TOTAL | 7th | 8th | 9th | TOTAL |
| Fiction | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Sports | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| Mysteries | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| Biographies | 7 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 9 | 7 | 7 | 8 |
| Scientific | 6 | 5 | 6 | 5 | - | 5 | 5 | 7 |
| Non-Fiction | 5 | 9 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Adventure | 4 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | - | 10 | 14 |
| Research | 10 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 10 | 3 | 5 |
| History | 9 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 13 | 8 | 12 |
| All Kinds | 6 | 1 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 |
| Science | 8 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 9 | 6 | 10 |
| Cars | 8 | 10 | 8 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 10 |
| Animals | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 7 | 13 | 10 | 13 |
| Romance | 9 | 10 | 9 | 12 | - | - | - | - |
| Horse | 8 | 9 | 10 | 13 | 9 | 13 | 9 | 14 |
| War | 9 | 9 | - | 13 | - | - | - | - |
| Motorcycles | | | | | 9 | 13 | 8 | 13 |
| Teenagers | | | | | 9 | - | 7 | 13 |
| Drugs | | | | | 6 | 12 | 9 | 11 |
| Sex | | | | | 6 | - | 10 | 13 |
| Poetry | 8 | - | 9 | 14 | | | | |

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CHART O

Magazines Library Needs More Of

| GRADE | By Rank 7th | 8th | 9th | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sex | 1 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| Teenage Girl | 2 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| Newspapers | 4 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Sports | 3 | 1 | 6 | 4 |
| Car and Motorcycle | 5 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Mad | 6 | 3 | 5 | 5 |
| Fashion | - | 6 | 5 | 6 |

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CHART P

Kinds of Newspapers and Magazines
Read Most Often

| GRADE | Rank 7th | 8th | 9th | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| News | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Sports | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Fashion | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Teenage girls | 6 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Cars | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Comics | 6 | 6 | 7 | 6 |
| Playboy | 5 | - | 8 | 7 |
| Motorcycles | 8 | 8 | 7 | 8 |
| Womens | 7 | 10 | 8 | 9 |
| Science | 8 | 7 | - | 10 |
| Fishing | - | 8 | 10 | 11 |
| Underground | 9 | 11 | 9 | 12 |
| Electronics | - | 9 | 11 | 13 |
| Nature | 7 | - | 11 | 13 |
| Obscene | - | 11 | 9 | 13 |

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CHART Q

Names of Magazines Read Most Often

| GRADE | Rank 7th | 8th | 9th | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Life | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Lawrence Tribune | 2 | 2 | 5 | 2 |
| Time | 5 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Look | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Seventeen | 7 | 4 | 3 | 5 |
| Sports Illustrated | 4 | 8 | 7 | 6 |
| Boston Globe | 7 | 7 | 6 | 7 |
| Andover Townsman | 6 | 6 | 10 | 8 |
| Playboy | 7 | 9 | 8 | 9 |
| Newsweek | 9 | 9 | 9 | 10 |
| Herald Traveler | 8 | 13 | 13 | 11 |
| American Girl | 6 | 15 | 15 | 11 |
| National Geographic | 10 | 10 | 13 | 12 |
| Hot Rod | 10 | 12 | 14 | 13 |
| Mad | 10 | 11 | 16 | 14 |
| Vogue | 14 | 12 | 12 | 15 |
| McCall | 11 | 19 | 11 | 16 |
| Ingenue | 14 | 13 | 14 | 17 |
| Reader's Digest | 17 | 7 | 17 | 18 |
| Field and Stream | 17 | 14 | 16 | 19 |
| Car and Driver | 14 | 16 | 17 | 19 |
| Teen | 18 | 19 | 13 | 20 |
| Boy's Life | 12 | 19 | 20 | 21 |

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CHART Q

Names of Magazines Read Most Often (continued)

| GRADE | Rank 7th | 8th | 9th | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sixteen | 16 | 21 | 15 | 22 |
| Outdoor Life | 17 | 17 | 19 | 23 |
| New York Times | 15 | 21 | 18 | 24 |
| Popular Mechanics | 13 | 21 | 20 | 24 |
| Ladies Home Journal | 18 | 22 | 14 | 24 |
| Popular Science | 17 | 18 | 20 | 25 |
| Better Homes & Gardens | 17 | 20 | 19 | 26 |
| Family Guide | 16 | 19 | 21 | 26 |
| Glamour | 19 | 21 | 17 | 27 |
| Record American | 19 | 21 | 18 | 28 |
| Sport | - | 20 | 18 | 29 |
| Mademoiselle | 18 | 22 | 19 | 29 |
| Women's Day | 18 | 19 | - | 29 |
| Skiing | - | 33 | 16 | 30 |
| Motor Trend | - | 22 | 17 | 30 |
| U.S. News | 19 | - | 18 | 31 |
| Ebony | 18 | - | 19 | 31 |
| Ski | 17 | 23 | 21 | 31 |
| Cycle | - | 23 | 18 | 32 |
| Red Book | 18 | 23 | 21 | 32 |
| Sporting News | 18 | 22 | - | 32 |
| Co-Ed | - | 21 | 21 | 33 |
| Holiday | - | 21 | 21 | 33 |
| Esquire | 18 | - | 21 | 33 |

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CHART Q

Names of Magazines Read Most Often (continued)

| GRADE | Rank 7th | Rank 8th | Rank 9th | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Good Housekeeping | 18 | - | - | 34 |
| Stag | - | - | 19 | 34 |
| Parent's Magazine | - | 21 | - | 34 |
| Model Railroader | - | 21 | - | 34 |

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CHART R

Suggestions for Improving the Library

| GRADE | Rank 7th | 8th | 9th | TOTAL | By Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No Comment | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 22 |
| More time | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 20 |
| More books | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 18 |
| Enlarge | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 15 |
| O.K. now | 5 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| More listening room | 9 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 4 |
| More Magazines | - | 6 | 6 | 7 | 3 |
| More talking | 6 | 7 | 10 | 8 | 2 |
| More freedom | 7 | - | 8 | 9 | 2 |
| A place to talk | 8 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 2 |
| Piped in music | 8 | - | 7 | 10 | 1 |
| AV tapes, etc.l | 8 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 1 |
| Air conditioning | 7 | - | 9 | 11 | 1 |
| More quiet | 8 | - | 9 | 11 | 1 |

CHART S

Of All the Materials
Needed or Wanted
Library Fulfills

| | Percent | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| All | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Most | 42 | 37 | 32 | 35 |
| Some | 34 | 37 | 34 | 35 |
| Few | 15 | 13 | 18 | 16 |
| None | 7 | 3 | 8 | 6 |